

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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O 171216Z DEC 76 ZFF 4
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8872

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 20398

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FOR SCHAUFLE FROM WISNER

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK, US
SUBJECT: CHONA ELABORATES THE PATRIOTIC FRONT'S
POSITION

1. I CALLED ON MARK CHONA TO COMPLETE OUR DISCUSSION OF THE TWO POINTS HE LEFT OUTSTANDING DURING OUR TALK IN GENEVA ON DECEMBER 14.
 2. WITH RESPECT TO THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS WHO WILL RETURN TO RHODESIA AT THE OUTSET OF THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT, CHONA SAID THAT THEIR NUMBERS WOULD BE SMALL. WHILE "THE HIGHLY SELECTED, MATURE GROUP" WOULD SERVE AS BODYGUARDS FOR THE NATIONALIST POLITICIANS, A POLICE FORCE FOR AFRICAN TOWNSHIPS AND "GUINEA PIGS" IN ARMY INTEGRATION, THEY WOULD WORK OUTSIDE THE ESTABLISHED CHAINS OF COMMAND AND WOULD REPORT DIRECTLY TO THEIR TRADITIONAL POLITICAL-MILITARY LEADERS. WHAT DUTIES AND HOW MANY WOULD ACTUALLY RETURN WOULD BE A SUBJECT OF NEGOTIATION. CHONA INSISTED THAT MUGABE AND NKOMO FELT STRONGLY THEY MUST HAVE AN ARMED ELEMENT RESPONSIBLE TO THEM
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DIRECTLY WHO WOULD PROVIDE PROTECTION IN THE EVENT THAT THE NATIONALIST POLITICIANS ARE ATTACKED BY RENEGADE EUROPEANS OR OTHER UNCONTROLLED ELEMENTS. COORDINATING THEIR ACTIVITIES WITH THE REGULAR POLICE/MILITARY FORCES WOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT. ASKED HOW HE THOUGHT THIS MIGHT BE DONE, CHONNOOULD GO NO

FURTHER THAN REFER TO JOINT COMMAND RKM NSHIPS BETWEEN THE PORTUGUESE AND FRELIMO IN PREINDEPENDENCE MOZAMBIQUE. CHONA CYNICALLY DISMISSED AS UNIMPORTANT ARGUMENTS THAT AN ARMED FORCE OF THIS NATURE COULD BE SEEN AS A THREAT BY MUZOREWA, SITHOLE, AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY.

3. CHONA POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS THE INTENTION OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT TO CALL BACK TO RHODESIA THE BATTALIONS OF FREEDOM FIGHTERS WHO WERE RETRAINED IN ZAMBIA, TANZANIA AND MOZAMBIQUE SIX MONTHS AFTER THE FORMATION OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND BEFORE ELECTIONS. THEIR ENTRY, HOWEVER, WOULD BE SUBJECT TO AUTHORIZATION OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND THE FORCES WOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO THE REGULAR ARMY. ELABORATING ON HIS EARLIER CONTENTION THAT ALL FREEDOM FIGHTERS WOULD UNDERGO REGULAR MILITARY TRAINING IN MOZAMBIQUE, ZAMBIA AND TANZANIA, CHONA SAID "SOME" WOULD STAY IN GUERRILLA CAMPS FOR IMMEDIATE USE IN THE EVENT SMITH ATTEMPTED A SECOND UDI.

4. CONCERNING THE REPLACEMENT OF RHODESIAN OFFICERS AT THE OUTSET OF TRANSITION, CHONA SAID THAT HIS CONSULTATIONS HAD LED HIM TO UNDERSTAND THE PATRIOTIC FRONT WOULD WISH ABOUT 20 OFFICERS IN THE ARMY AND FIVE OFFICERS OR LESS IN THE AIR FORCE TO BE REPLACED. THOSE SUBJECT TO DEMOBILIZATION WOULD BE ALL OFFICERS OF THE RANK OF COLONEL AND ABOVE. IN ADDITION, THE PATRIOTIC FRONT WOULD ASK FOR THE DEMOBILIZATION OF THE RHODESIAN CALVARY UNIT CALLED THE "GRAYS" AS WELL
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AS ANY "MERCENARIES" WORKING IN THE RHODESIAN ARMY. THE TERRITORIAL FORCES AND NATIONAL SERVICEMEN WOULD BE PHASED OUT DURING TRANSITION AND ALL REMAINING WHITE OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS WOULD BE ASKED EITHER TO SWEAR AN OATH OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE QUEEN OR QUIT MILITARY SERVICE.

5. SENIOR OFFICERS IN THE RHODESIAN COMMAND STRUCTURE SHOULD BE REPLACED BY ACTIVE DUTY BRITISH MILITARY PERSONNEL ON LOAN OR RETIRED OFFICERS. CHONA WAS QUITE DISPARAGING ABOUT THE USE OF COMMONWEALTH OFFICERS WHO HE FELT WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF RHODESIAN FORCES.

6. I TNLD CHONA I THOUGHT THE PATRIOTIC FRONT'S PROPOSALS WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO MANAGE AND EMPHASIZED THE GREAT PROBLEMS ATTACHED TO NKOMO AND

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MUGABE INTRODUCING PRIVATE ARMIES NO MATTER HOW SMALL. I FURTHER NOTED THAT I DID NOT SEE HOW SMITH WOULD ACCEPT THE DEMOBILIZATION OF THE ENTIRE SENIOR STAFF OF HIS ARMED FORCES AND POINTED OUT THAT THE POSITION OF THE FRONT IN THE MILITARY FIELD STANDS IN SHARP CONTRAST TO THE MODERATE POSITION THEY HAD TAKEN ON THE QUESTIONS OF THE JUDICIARY, POLICE, CIVIL SERVICE, AND ECONOMY. WHILE DEFENDING THE FRONT'S VIEWS STOUTLY IN TERMS OF THE THREAT POSED BY SMITH AND HIS SUPPORTERS, CHONA SAID THAT HE WAS TRYING TO RESPOND TO THE SECRETARY'S REQUEST THAT HE GIVE A FULL PICTURE OF NKOMO'S AND MUGABE'S INTENTIONS. HE REMARKED HE DID NOT WANT US TO BE SURPRISED WHEN THE FRONT MADE ITS CASE.

7. COMMENT: AS I EXPECTED, THE POSITION OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, IN THE TERMS CHONA DESCRIBES IT, HAS ESCALATED. THE FRONT'S POSITION IS SO EXTREME THAT I AM SURE IT CAN BE MODERATED THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS. I HAVE BRIEFED THE BRITISH ON CHONA'S ANNOTATIONS TO THE PATRIOTIC FRONT'S POSITION AND THEY, TOO, BELIEVE THE MILITARY PROPOSALS ARE SUBJECT TO SHARP REVISION. NO BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR RHO-DESIA UNDER MILITARY ARRANGEMENTS SIMILAR TO THOSE OUTLINED BY CHONA.

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